

# WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

## **Grants and New Motorway**

*London Property Letter, June 14*

**B**OLTON'S MOTTO is *Supera moras*, which roughly rendered in the vernacular, means "we will overcome." Plenty of overcoming needs to be done — problems like a 14,000-job run-down in cotton (once the town's major industry) since 1957, and a forecast of a further drastic run-down between now and 1975. And white knight Sir John Hunt, chairman of the committee which has been looking into the problems of intermediate areas, coloured the whole of North East Lancashire industrial grey.

Bolton has problems all right but a touch of the Government's promised £20 million could work wonders. Bolton is already looking a much brighter spot than it did just a few years ago. The unemployment rate is now down to 1.7 per cent. Like Doncaster, too, it's one town which is benefiting immensely from the arrival of the motorways: it stands at the centre of a complex of existing and proposed routes.

What happens when the motorway arrives? Well, usually firms from the overcrowded south east and Midlands flow in. It's already happening in Bolton—though the arrival of the motorway is not the only responsible factor . . . . The influx of new firms has already been a major factor in producing a surge at the upper end of the residential property price range.

## **Dangerous Game of Quotas**

*Editorial, New York Times, May 24*

**S**ECRETARY OF COMMERCE Maurice H. Stans and the Nixon Administration have been playing an international trade game that is every bit as dangerous as that in which hot-rodders drive directly toward each other until one loses nerve and switches to another highway lane.

The Secretary was rebuffed on almost every side during his recent swing through Europe and Asia, where he tried to persuade friendly countries to put "voluntary" quota restrictions on their exports of woollen and synthetic textiles to the United States. Now he warns that unless they shape up and cooperate within ninety days, Congress will unilaterally impose quotas with the acquiescence of the White House.

The basically offensive nature of these high-pressure tactics, interlarded with threats, is bad enough. What makes it even worse is the practical possibility that it not only won't work but may back-

fire. The textile producing countries could conceivably bow to the American ultimatum, but if they refuse there might well be a disaster; a series of retaliatory moves escalating into a trade war that could turn back the clock of international commerce by thirty years.

If total employment and profits in the domestic textile industry were plummeting because of a flood of imports, one might understand, though not condone, the drive for quota protection. But both employment and profits in the textile industry have been growing. The case for protection rests on no firmer ground than President Nixon's campaign pledge to Carolina mill operators.

The Administration, Secretary Stans declares, believes in liberal trade policies. Such a profession of faith is meaningless so long as the United States engages in the dangerous and self-destructive game of quotas, one of the most insidious methods of restricting the free flow of international trade.

## **Slum Promotion Housing Policies**

Karl Falk, President First Federal Savings and Loan Association, May 19

**O**UR PRESENT property tax system promotes urban blight, urban sprawl, land speculation, and a host of other unsound public policies. It penalizes improvements, thwarts urban rehabilitation, building investment, home improvements and orderly development. If the property tax were shifted more from buildings to the land, it would be profitable for private enterprise, without any subsidy, to tear down and replace practically all the obsolete buildings in downtown areas and to build better housing.

In 1968 there were fourteen million vacant lots in American cities. The economic waste of these and other uneconomically used lots is staggering. One of the most profitable investments I know of is slum property, and our tax system does little to penalize this. In fact, it rewards the slum owner and land speculator by allowing them a free ride on the backs of the rest of the taxpayers who have really created the values. For instance, when a city builds a school or a state builds a road, the lots in the area increase in value—as a result of society's and not some individual's actions. Accordingly, I feel the increment should be taxed more heavily than it is because the other taxpayers created the value. In northern California recently, the State purchased 3,000 acres of Salt Point Ranch in Sonoma County for a park for over \$2 million. The same property had been assessed for only

\$32,000 or 1.47 per cent of the market value of the land. Either the State of California was swindled by paying too much or one lucky taxpayer had been passing off his tax load to the rest of the property taxpayers of California for many years. I would also like to see all property tax exemptions removed, whether for schools, private or public, churches, or housing for veterans, elderly, or land owned by federal, state or local governments. Help the disadvantaged groups by direct subsidy, if necessary.

This is a complex topic, related to other tax and reform problems, but I am pleased to see that as time goes on, we are beginning to recognise this problem, and possible solutions, by way of untaxing improvements for property tax purposes. Look at how long it took this country to realise that high tariffs were a hindrance rather than a help to our trade and economy. The Douglas Commission and other groups are beginning to be more interested in looking at the possibility of shifting the emphasis on the property tax from buildings to land use, and I am encouraged.

Some day, when land gets scarce enough, we may have to consider letting people lease rather than own land to protect it for future generations. This is already being done in a few places in the United States and abroad.

We may be years ahead of most of the other countries in bathrooms, air conditioners, fixtures and gadgets, but we still have a way to go to ensure better site lay-out and design, undergrounding of utilities, removal of eyesores like billboards and auto junkyards, and just generally providing a better and healthier esthetic, social, biological, and physical environment for ourselves, and hopefully, for coming generations. It will take more than wishful thinking to solve some of these problems, especially those of low income housing. Recognition of the problems of housing and of saving our environment has to come first. But mere recognition is not enough. It has to be followed by constructive action.

### **Danger - Meddlers at Work**

Peter Simple in the *Daily Telegraph*, June 19

**W**HAT IS THE MAUD REPORT on Local Government but one more example—the greatest so far, but not the greatest, I am afraid, when all is said and done—of change for the sake of change, reform for the sake of reform, a determination to leave nothing, absolutely nothing alone?

The abolition, in effect, of the English counties, with all the historical traditions and loyalties that go with them, the subordination, in effect, of the country to the towns, under cover of averting that very thing; the disappearance in effect of the country altogether: all this is persuasively described as sensible and neces-

sary if we and our descendants are to have a tolerable and efficiently organised existence.

But lurking somewhere behind it all there is something neither sensible nor necessary. It is the huge smile of a demented social engineer cutting up England into neat, serviceable segments like so much cardboard, in the interests not of living people but of a hypothetical future.

Who will dare defy him now? Has he not got decimal coinage, metrication, comprehensive schools and other successes behind him? He is confident there will be no resistance. Who is going to wipe that smile from his face and prove him wrong?

*Of the £370,851 which the Redcliffe-Maud Commission cost, just on £111,000 was spent on printing and publishing the report, evidence and research studies.*

## **News and Comment**

### **INDIA'S GREEN REVOLUTION**

#### **—WHO BENEFITS?**

**M**AHINDERPAL SINGH, an enterprising and modern farmer in the vanguard of India's "green revolution," is so advanced that he is now preparing for the introduction of remote control for his tractors, reports the writer of a special article in *The New York Times*, May 28.

"Few Indian farmers are as advanced as Mr. Singh," he says, "but hundreds of thousands are hastening down the road he has travelled. Especially in the northern wheat belt, which came up with a gaudy 40 per cent increase in production last year and now seems to be harvesting an even bigger crop, the incomes of many farmers have more than quadrupled." The writer then adds: "Land values have soared."

Smaller farmers are not doing so well and the writer instances Tej Singh, "the debt-ridden owner of a paltry two acres" at Abupur 30 miles east of New Delhi. Tej Singh still farms the way Indians farmed 1,000 years ago and cannot recall the origin of his crushing debt on which he pays interest of 24 per cent to the moneylender. He knows the value of new methods and new seeds and fertiliser but said: "Those things are for the rich land owners, not me."

The strategy of the "green revolution," says the writer, calls for the concentration of modern farming methods in what are termed the most progressive parts of the country, those with assured irrigation, which account for roughly 15 per cent of the 565,000 villages. Within these it has not been the "backward